

Annual Report 2025



Choosing Our Roots 2025 Annual Report

As a nonprofit, the annual report is an integral part of transparency and accountability to our community. Here, you will find our year in review and our focus in 2026. We had a year full of queer joy, and we can't wait to share it with you! There's a LOT to share, so let's get started!



photo credit: Chris Avessuk

Table of Contents

Mission, Vision, and Values.....	1
Our Team.....	3
A Letter From Our Youth Board President.....	5
Our Year In Review.....	6
My Name Is Autumn, Here Is My Story.....	8
2026 Programs.....	10
We Are So Grateful For This Community.....	14
To Be Continued.....	17

Our Mission

To ensure all queer, Alaskan youth and young adults have safe homes, supportive communities, and opportunities to thrive.

photo credit: Chris Avessuk



Our Vision

- Dignity and Respect
- Empowerment
- Cultural Relevancy
- Community
- Hope

Our Values

Youth-Centered, Youth-Led

COR was founded by queer Alaskans and youth, for queer Alaskans and youth. Since its inception, queer youth have been at the wheel: developing policy, directing services, and informing decisions that impact its youth Participants.

A Place to Call Home

COR recognizes that putting a roof over someone's head will allow a person to survive, but to thrive, one needs a home. COR exists to provide the essential elements of security, support, and caring to youth Participants.

Culturally Relevant and Trauma-Informed

COR is committed to empowering survivors and helping youth retain connections to the cultures and communities that shape their identities as they heal and grow, so that the pathway to wellness is not a lonely journey. We believe we heal together.



photo credit: Chris Avessuk

Choosing Our Roots operates on the unceded traditional lands of the Dena'ina Ełena and Ahtna Dene' peoples. We recognize and respect their enduring relationship with these lands, waters, and communities, and we're grateful for their continued stewardship. In furthering the spirit of acknowledgement, we commit to fostering relationships grounded in reciprocity, care, and connection, values that guide everything we do at COR.



Our Board



Adam Lees

President



Andrew Harnish

Vice President



Shelia Olson

Treasurer



Robin Moffet

Secretary



Torrey McClain

Youth Board
President and
Voting Board
Member



Leah Zettler

Property
Committee



Mel Bechberger

Property
Committee



**Claire Knudsen-
Latta**

Community
Engagement
Committee



Our Staff

We grew! After two years of consolidating our resources and reviewing our capacity, we secured sustainable funding for our Mat-Su and Anchorage staff, and, thanks to Native Movement and Pride Foundation, we have been able to keep our “summer” intern as our full-time community and youth development coordinator!

Our programs got an update, too!

- In Anchorage, we offer transitional housing for adults 18-24 at SafeRoot Anchorage.
- In Mat-Su Valley, we operate the host home program for youth 13-24.
- And, we (finally) secured funding for a self-governing youth board!



Laura Reijns

Co-Director:
Operations



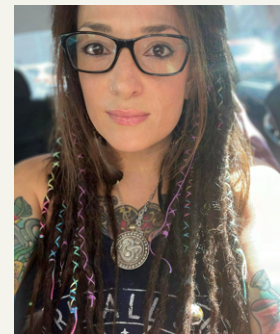
Chami Krueger,
LMSW

Co-Director:
Programming



Alex Peter

Lead Navigator



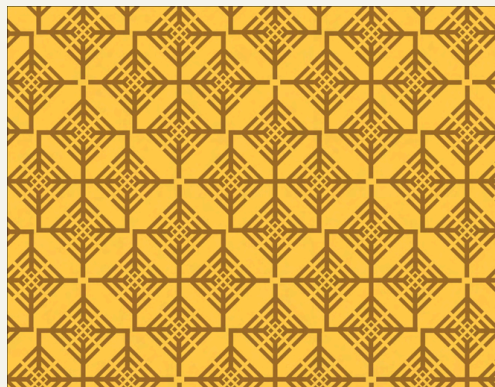
Roseann Ramos

Host Home
Liaison



Rem Soliday

Anchorage
Navigator



Oliver Tyrrell

Community and
Youth Development

We took on 2025 with pride...

Hello friends, community, and supporters! COR has had an amazing year! One of the biggest events we prepared for this year was the Anchorage Mayor's Charity Ball, where we had a **massive payout of \$60,678.83**. This money will directly go to supporting our Participantss and staff, as well as growing our organization. We have also had some changes in staffing, including some new staff members and expanding to add a new position.

Throughout this year, there has also been an emphasis on board growth, with the beginning stages of a youth board being discussed. With a focus on building a youth board, we have also provided more outreach to youth and, therefore, have gained more youth engagement than in previous years! Different kinds of training for future youth board members was also a focus this year that was met with excitement from

those young adults. Because of this board growth, there has been more involvement this year in partnerships with the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness and the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness. These are partnerships we hope to continue to grow and network with in the future.

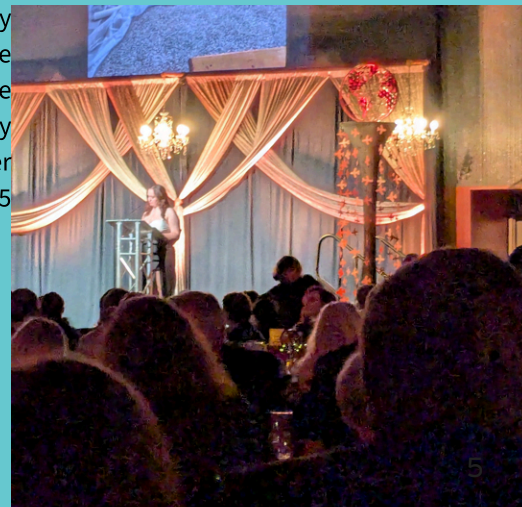
COR's number one mission has been to always serve the queer youth in our community during their times of need. This mission is at the forefront of everything we do and in our hearts when we look back at what we have accomplished, this year was no different and we cannot wait to experience what the year 2026 has in store for us all.

Sincerely,

Torrey McClain

Torrey McClain
Youth Board President and Voting Board Member

pictured: Torrey
speaking at the
Anchorage
Mayor's Charity
Ball in October
2025





20 25 Impact Report

Our Year at a Glance



\$130K

In individual donations



43

community partners



300

individual donors

Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA)



\$120,000

for rent, security deposit, and utilities assistance
for Anchorage residents

21 Households avoided
eviction

45 individuals
supported

Applications for Services

133

applications for support

57

applications received assistance
across all programs

SafeRoot Anchorage

8

young adults
supported

5

exits from
transitional
housing to long
term leases

36.5

cumulative
months of
assistance

Mat-Su Valley Valley

\$16,000

in direct cash
assistance to youth
and hosts

\$12,000

basic needs
support

129

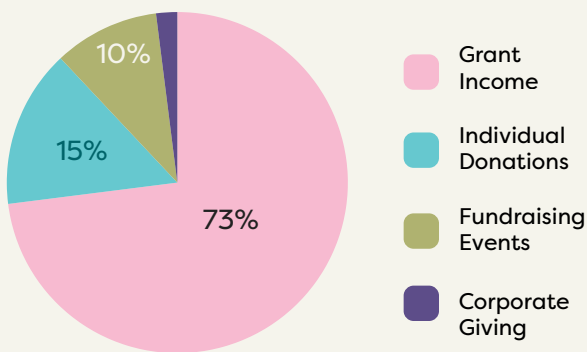
individuals served



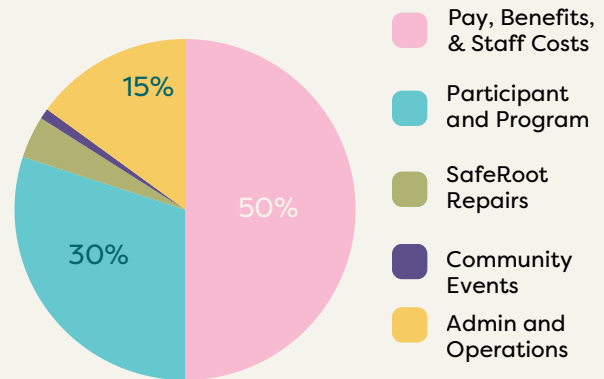


Finances and Demographics

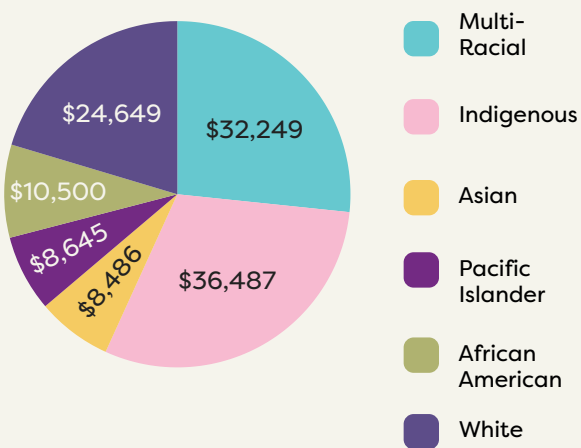
Income



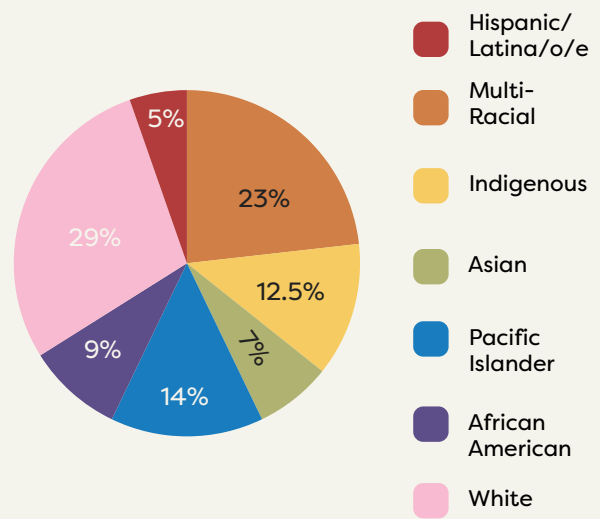
Expenses



ERA Equity Metrics



Program Demographics



My name is Autumn, and here is my story...

Hi! My name is Autumn, and here is my story:

Choosing Our Roots' SafeRoot program gave me the breathing room I desperately needed. After moving to Anchorage a year ago, for a fresh start after leaving an unhappy life and toxic relationship, I found myself back in a toxic living situation and, at times, living out of a car. I was exhausted, depressed, and barely eating. When my mom sent me resources, I reached out to several programs, and COR was the one that answered with real care. They were invested in me from the very beginning. They patiently stuck with me through months of apartment hunting, rejection after rejection from places that wouldn't take rental assistance, and never once made me feel like a burden. When a spot opened up for the SafeRoot program, they moved quickly to keep me in the program and get me settled.

Getting my own furnished space felt like a miracle! I cried my first night there, and even through the sleepless ones that followed, I could finally breathe. Being in a space created for queer youth also grounded me in my identity. As a Black queer woman, being surrounded by LGBTQIA+ staff and community members made me feel seen, affirmed, and part of a real community for the first time.

I feel safe, supported, and understood.

Since moving in, I've started to rebuild my life. I left a toxic job and found work that actually fits me and pays better. I reconnected with hobbies that make me feel like myself again, ended a harmful relationship, and am trying to commit to therapy.



pictured: volunteer painting a wall at SafeRoot to match the rainbow theme of the building.

"I feel safe, supported, and understood"



LITTLE THINGS:

Taking a shower in my own space, cooking a meal in my kitchen, coming home after a long day at work, and feeling warm and secure have become huge markers of healing. I still have hard days, but my confidence and mental health have grown so much, and I'm learning to set boundaries and accept that I deserve this stability. Having a community that affirms who I am has made that growth feel even more possible.

I AM ENDLESSLY GRATEFUL

to Chami, Rem, Laura, and everyone at Choosing Our Roots for believing in me and showing up when I needed it most. I'm not from Alaska, and they still gave me a chance at a new life!! Their support helped me find peace and resilience I didn't think was possible. Looking ahead, I hope to give back by doing volunteer work for the community and for queer youth, find a long-term space of my own, get a newer car, and keep investing in my mental health, happiness, and peace. I can't thank COR enough for helping me feel safe, seen, loved, and capable of the future I'm building.

Thank you,

Autumn



2026 Program Snapshots



SafeRoot Anchorage

SafeRoot Anchorage is a 6-plex owned and operated by Choosing Our Roots. As a transitional housing program, Participants have safe, stable housing for up to 12 months, where they can build vital skills for their independence.



Mat-Su Host Home Expansion

The host home model is an evidence-based program that partners safe adults with Participants, keeping youth connected to their communities. Community members (hosts) open their home to a Participants, providing life-saving housing.



Perfectly Queer

A self-governing youth board, Perfectly Queer shapes policy and programming internally and externally to COR. PQ is youth-centered, youth-led, and youth-focused, with assistance and support provided by COR staff. Youth are paid \$30/hr for up to 10 hours a week for their expertise and partner with the state to make actionable change.



**CHOOSING
OUR ROOTS**

Perfectly Queer

photo credit: Chris Avessuk

Thanks to our partnership with the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness and Pride Foundation, we now have sustainable funding for our Youth Action Board, Perfectly Queer! Youth between the ages of 16-24 can join the board and help shape programming, policy, and community events with COR *and* get paid \$30/hr for up to 10 hours a week!

Plans for PQ

1

Fundraise to expand what can be offered: more hours, paying for training and conferences, increasing the number of youth who can engage.

2

Create community education to increase awareness: teach providers, community members, and organizations how to best support queer young people.

3

Review policy and procedures within Choosing Our Roots: better align practice with Participants' needs, learn nonprofit governance, and help enact systemic change!



Seeking Hosts in the Mat-Su Valley!

The need for safe, stable homes for at-risk youth in the Mat-Su Valley is an ongoing and continuous priority. Hosts are provided with an unrestricted stipend of \$500 a month, training, regular case management, an annual allotment of basic needs funding, and community-building opportunities, all while changing the world for one person! If you have a spare room and want to help make a difference in your community, contact us today to learn more!



photo credit: Robin Moffet

“If it weren’t for my host, I don’t think I’d be here. Having
community
literally saved my life...”

-Graduated Participant, 2023

WE'RE STARTING YOUTH CIRCLES IN 2026

Thanks to our partnership with Mat-Su Health Foundation, we will be starting youth-focused learning circles in the new year! Using curriculum from One Circle Foundation, our skilled direct service team will explore topics of intersectionality, internet and tech safety, family, self-identity, and other soft skills that will help young people navigate life.

In the future, youth board members will facilitate and lead these groups, giving them work experience and income while supporting their peers.

Are you a youth interested in attending? Scan the QR code to complete our info survey to determine when, how, and where we meet!





We are so grateful for this community...

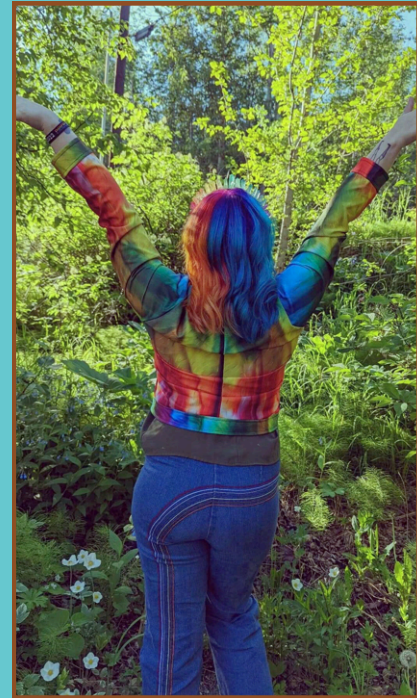
Last January, many of our neighbors and community partners reached out and asked how they could be more supportive in the face of changing political landscapes. Whether that was more volunteer opportunities, increased donorship, or just getting the word out, when things started getting tougher for the LGBTQIA2S+ community, you all stepped up. As we plan for the year ahead, we do so with vivacity, courage, and the awareness that you are supporting us. We are so grateful for this community. For each and every one of you.

The expansion of our host home program in the Mat-Su Valley Valley is well underway, and we are hoping to onboard 4-5 more hosts before next fall. This will allow us to increase our caseload in the Valley, providing essential services to more queer youth and young adults. If you know anyone in the Mat-Su Valley Valley who may be interested, send them our way! You, a friend, a family member, *someone* can change the world for one person!

*“we are
privileged to have
the partnerships
we do”*

With SafeRoot Anchorage funded for the next year, we are working to further build out and increase the sustainability of the program, focusing on life skill development and securing funding for rental assistance. Participants can use to move on to their next adventure. It is our greatest hope that this bridge gives them the independence, resources, and skills to avoid housing insecurity in the future. Knowing that we have one full year of rent and utilities covered for 5 apartments was the biggest relief of 2025, and we are ready to continue our work of building a program that encourages life-altering change!

We are privileged to have the partnerships we do, which has allowed us to refuse federal funding that would have required us to change our entire organization. We do this with the knowledge that there may come a time when our options do not give us that freedom. This is why, with all the funding uncertainties the future holds, we are working hard to create additional financial reserves to sustain us if grant funding is no longer accessible. When you contribute to our mission, your money goes directly into the programs we operate, providing food, clothing, hygiene products, transportation, and other basic needs. When you contribute to our mission, your money goes directly toward a security deposit or first month of rent for a young adult at SafeRoot. When you contribute to our mission, your money makes a significant impact in the lives of our Participants.



Our 2026 fundraising goal is to raise \$150,000 to cover operating costs, basic needs support, rental assistance, and life skill development opportunities for our Participants and Hosts. Please consider donating this holiday season to help kickstart our endeavor. It is *felt*, every dollar.

Remember, you are loved and important. You are magic. You are sacred.

With Queer Joy and Deep Appreciation,

Chami Krueger *Laura Reijns*

Chami Krueger & Laura Reijns
Co-Directors of Choosing Our Roots





*“I want to
express my
deepest
gratitude...”*

...Truly, I couldn't have done this without Choosing Our Roots. To be able to have something I've always dreamed of and to truly be in my own space is a blessing that I promise never to undervalue. Thank you for what you do for not just me, but many queer individuals looking to find a safer option just to exist and live. You are a blessing to our community, and I thank you for everything you do.”

-Graduated Participant, 2025



photo credit: Chris Aversuk

To be continued...

How you can help in 2026:

Scan the QR code for our linktree, where you can sign up for our newsletter, start the volunteer process, contribute to our 2026 fundraising goal, and more!

